

BUDGET / FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: William O'Dell (Chair), John Bento and Diana Campbell

School Committee, Administration and Staff: Marjorie McBride, Mario Andrade and Pauline Silva

Public: Kristen Quinn, Kevin Faria, Paul LaBonte, Timothy Gardiner and Kirsten DiChiappari (6:47)

Bill O'Dell called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Diana Campbell motioned to approve the minutes to the January 18, 2011 meeting. John Bento seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 3 to 0.

Bill O'Dell explained the purpose of this meeting is to begin preparing for Joint Finance; Mario Andrade added specific cuts will not be

discussed tonight. The process is: 1) prepare a budget request by March 1st , 2) present the request to Joint Finance during March, and 3) proceed with budget figures handed down by Joint Finance.

Budget Development – FY 2012

Pauline presented the budget figures needed in 2011-2012 to continue services as they are this year. An additional \$1,905,816 (3.64%) over this year's budget will be needed to cover the fixed costs over which the District has no control (e.x. contractual salary increases, health benefit cost increases, retirement contributions, transportation contract, utilities, etc.). Health insurance comes in at a \$13.7% increase; Pauline had planned on 11.5%; the actual increase would have been 16.3% were it not for actions already taken during the year.

Revenues are projected to be decreased by \$1,081,812 (results of the funding formula, 5% decrease expected in State funding, decreased housing aid).

Total funding needed to continue services: \$2,987,628. The approximate contribution by town is--\$2M from Bristol, \$1M from Warren. Warren's contribution will be slightly higher this year (35.98%) and Bristol's slightly lower (64.02%) based on the October 1, 2010 student enrollment numbers.

Per Senate Bill 3050 a maximum increase of 4.25% can be given, or \$1.3M.

On Friday, UCOA data will be rolled out which will give a clear comparison of how funds are utilized by the different communities in Rhode Island so we can see in which areas we may be high or low.

Comments/ Suggestions:

Kristen Quinn: Include a summary sheet and a detail sheet in the request; request the full amount needed to preserve the education and not provide another option; provide a summary of all the cuts made over the past three years. Kristen asked if any huge discrepancies are anticipated when UCOA is rolled out. Pauline responded this is not known; preliminary research shows we are allocating more of our budget to direct instruction and reducing leadership costs. If school quality goes down, property value goes down.

Diana Campbell: Add the word “fixed” to the costs on the Continuation of Services report; present 3 sets of numbers—if level funded=X; if funded at 1% inc.= X; if funded at decrease = X. Compute the amount of tax increase to each family in order to fund the District the amount necessary to continue services.

Marj McBride: There are areas we need to hire because we had cut too deeply.

Kevin Faria: Can any of the utility, rubbish or maintenance contracts be taken over by the Towns? In the past Marj had approached the Town for rubbish collection collaboration and was refused because the Town does not have enough trucks. Kevin asked how much of the past cuts were in anticipation of the funding formula; Pauline explained past cuts were for efficiencies that were educationally sound and based on the average increase in funding and the history of cuts. Other efficiencies explored were in bussing, food service, and GHGRI.

Paul Labonte: Important to identify the places we can be efficient and have those conversations now. Identify the state mandates for which waivers can be sought; it is the responsibility of this committee to assure administration is working on this; we must provide concrete evidence of demonstrated efficiencies; a great deal of money can be saved by looking at things with new eyes.

Tim Gardiner: Outsourcing maintenance could save some money, although the maintenance staff works hard, they are not licensed and take longer to do the jobs; preliminary discussions have been had by administration. Tim asked about Mt. Hope students going to East Providence Voch Tech, saying he heard there was not enough money to send the students. Mario explained approximately 16 students currently attend EPVT and RI Law mandates that we fund the tuition for those students who wish to attend.

Kirsten DiChiappari: There needs to be efficiencies for services; whether the Towns cover it or give us the money to cover it, either way the money comes from the same source-- tax dollars. There appears to be a disconnect between the Councils and the District; the concept of economic development is connected to education; even though tax payers may not have children in the schools, it is for the greater good.

Mario Andrade explained the Superintendent's talking points will be published on our website; Mt. Hope and Kickemuit are to be commended for their NECAP growth over the past 3 to 4 years.

Free and Reduced Lunch Recipients

This is voluntary and the numbers could be higher; there exists a stigma attached to this designation and there should be a public campaign to change that; we need to chase the forms that go home with students on the first day; subsequent outreaches are done through Title I and by nurses.

Preparation for Joint Finance

Bill O'Dell had set the tone last year, which was very effective; many felt the tone this year should be of cooperation and joint responsibility to educate our children-- "we are in this together". You do not get to be a town people want to live in unless you have a good school district. The towns have not stepped up because we were

getting extra money and did not need it; the towns need to be committed and invest in the future; the Town Councils have to voice their commitment.

Suggestions/Comments:

- The tone should reiterate the mission statement of the District; we must provide concrete evidence of efficiencies in the system and challenge the towns to do the same or rewrite their mission statement.**
- When the Councils say their constituents do not want their taxes to go up, we can respond we have 3200 people who want to invest in education.**
- Change mindset that still exists in a way that provides cover to get buy in**
- Encourage parents and the community to attend Joint Finance again—their presence and input made a difference last year**
- Determine what the actual cost to each taxpayer will be in order to provide the \$2.98M needed**
- Involve the BWEF**
- Explore out sourcing of services**
- Explore utilization of shared resources with the towns**
- Compare our property tax revenue dedicated to education to the rates of other districts**
- Educate the public on the resourcefulness of this District**
- Create a community task force**
- Create an activity fee**

- Rally groups like the PTOs to the cause
- Start creating booster groups
- Ensure funding of categorical items
- Restore and sustain the 2% regionalization bonus
- Explain how helping the District provide a good education to our children ultimately helps the entire community
- Revive the District-wide PTO
- Notify parents of the need for their involvement early enough for them to prepare
- Town Council members have been invited to tour the schools and join the students at lunch on March 4.
- Parents are more apt to be involved if they are made aware of what programs will be cut if we do not get sufficient funding.
- We cannot take the towns to court if they meet the minimum maintenance of effort.
- Parents should be involved in the decisions on cuts

The Committee discussed the Joint Finance meeting format and all agreed more than one meeting is necessary and administration must be well-prepared. Parents must be given an opportunity to speak if the process is to be fair and transparent. Bill, Pauline, Mario and Melinda each will bring something different to the presentation but all with a common theme. Melinda's PowerPoint presentation will include more visuals. Bill will respectfully ask David Barboza, Joint Finance Committee Chair, what the dates of the meetings are going to be.

Adjournment

MOTION: At 8:20 PM Diana Campbell motioned to adjourn. John Bento seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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